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SUBJECT: MFA DISCUSSES VISIT OF ARMENIAN PRESIDENT AND  
EU-RUSSIA MAY 10 SUMMIT

Classified By: CHARGE JOSIAH ROSENBLATT, FOR REASONS 1.4 B/D

1.(C) Summary: Poloff met with the MFA's PDAS equivalent for Russia and the former Soviet space Serge Smessow on April 25 to discuss Armenian President Kocharian's April 21-22 visit to Paris and French thoughts on the upcoming EU-Russia Summit. Smessow was confident negotiation of the "4 Spaces" of EU-Russia cooperation would conclude before the May 10 Summit.

#### Visit of Armenian President

2.(C) Armenian President Robert Kocharian visited France April 21-22 and met with President Chirac as well as members of the Armenian community, Smessow said. On April 22, the two presidents laid wreaths at the statue of Komitas, an Armenian musician. The statue memorializes as well the victims of the Turkish massacres of Armenians in 1915 and Armenian soldiers killed fighting for France. During his speech Chirac did not use the word "genocide" to describe the 1915 mass killings, but reprised a GOF phrase encouraging Turkey to "examine its history" with regards to the 1915 massacres. This official reticence on Chirac's part contrasts with the French Parliament, which in 2001 passed a law containing only one article: "France publicly recognizes the Armenian genocide of 1915." The law caused an abrupt downturn in Franco-Turkish relations and remains an irritant in today's somewhat improved ties between the two countries.

3.(C) According to estimates by ethnic Armenian organizations, France contains the largest population of Armenians in Europe with estimates of about 400,000 centered in Paris, Lyon and Marseille, many of them descendants of those who fled the 1915 genocide to refuge in France. Smessow said that due to fears of Turkey entering the European Union the Armenian community is leaning towards voting "no" in the May 29 referendum on the EU Constitution and therefore, the French government is working hard to convince the population that the constitution is not linked to Turkish accession. Smessow noted that Armenians in Armenia are in favor of Turkey's accession because Armenia would then have a border with the EU and in addition, Turkey would be forced to resolve its border issues with Armenia. Smessow said the two presidents held a private meeting with no notetakers during which he assumed the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh was discussed.

#### "4 SPACES" NEARING CONCLUSION

4.(C) When asked about the current status of the EU-Russia action plans on the "four spaces," Smessow responded that negotiations are 95 percent complete. Currently, he said, only two questions remain: visa concerns and economic matters. Russia insists, said Smessow, that its citizens traveling on diplomatic passports be granted visa-free access to the EU. Given past abuses by Russia, many EU countries are hesitant, said Smessow. In addition, Smessow added that Russian reluctance to accept non-Russians who had entered the EU from Russia and who were subsequently deported from the EU is still a problem and a prerequisite for easing reciprocal visa requirements. On the economic front, Russia continues to hold fast to its position on Siberia overflight fees, said Smessow.

5.(C) After the May 10 EU-Russia Summit, and assuming that the "4 spaces" have been approved, Smessow said the EU and Russia were looking towards 2007 as the next marker for evaluating progress on implementing the "4 spaces" and possibly working to negotiate new agreements for cooperation. Looking ahead to negotiating the last pieces of the "4 spaces" agreements, Smessow said France was "open but not blind." (Comment: This phrase, reminiscent of President Reagan's "trust but verify" direction, conveniently papers over the fact that France and other like-minded EU countries prefer to focus on being open with Russia (especially in the economic and commercial sense), and are reluctant to criticize Moscow for democratic shortcomings and human rights abuses. End comment.)

#### Chirac in Moscow

6.(C) Smessow confirmed that President Chirac will be in Moscow May 9 for the WWII commemorative events. Chirac does not plan any bilateral activities, but will preside over the dedication of a Charles de Gaulle monument in front of the Cosmos hotel in Moscow.  
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